MR. RIPLEY'S SERMON,

DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF THE EXECUTION OF

SAMUEL SMITH.

BRITISH MUSEUM

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR
EXPLAINED AND URGED
IN A
SERMON,
DELIVERED
AT CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,
DECEMBER 26, 1799,
Being the Day on which SAMUEL SMITH
was executed for *Burglary*.

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Miniſter of Concord.

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MATTHEW xxii. 39.

THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.

THE crime, which is this day to be capitally puniſhed, is a direct violation of the law of love to our neighbour. The words read will not, therefore, it is preſumed, be thought unſuitable for the theme of a diſcourſe, on the preſent very ſolemn and affecting occaſion. They are very conciſe and ſimple in expreſſion; but their meaning is great, their contents are weighty and extremely intereſting to individuals and to ſociety.

I ſhall endeavour to ſhow,

Firſt, The true meaning of the law of love to our neighbour in its nature and extent;

Secondly, The reaſonableneſs and obligation of this law; and, then, make improvement by way of inference and application.

Firſt. I am to ſhow the true meaning of the law of love to our neighbour in its nature and extent.

It pleaſed God to create man in his own moral likeneſs; to endue him with knowledge to underſtand the divine character and his own duty; with rectitude of mind and holy principles of action, that he might obey his Maker, and be the object of his complacency. On the underſtanding and heart of man

man the Lord wrote two comprehenſive and unalterable laws, viz. Love to God, and Love to men.—Theſe were to him the rule and covenant of life. Accordingly, Jeſus Chriſt, who taught the will of God in perfection, when this queſtion was put to him, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" anſwered, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Although by the ſinful lapſe of man our nature is ſo depraved, that we are prone to tranſgreſs, and our moral powers are ſo debilitated, that we cannot render perfect obedience; and, in boundleſs compaſſion, a Saviour is provided, to redeem us from ſin and the curſe of the law; yet Jeſus Chriſt "came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil it."* He came not to lower its demands and weaken its obligations, but to obey it perfectly for man; not to excuſe any from the duties enjoined, nor to tolerate the leaſt ſin, but to exemplify its perfect morals, and aid us in ſincere and univerſal imitation of himſelf. This law, therefore, is now our rule of life. Sincere obedience to it is a ſervice moſt reaſonable, uſeful, and neceſſary.

Love is one of the primary affections of the mind, and always inclines us to will and to do whatever appears to be right and good. It is the oppoſite of hatred, which invariably prompts to ſin, unleſs it be directed againſt ſin itſelf. Love to God exhibits itſelf in reverence and worſhip, admiration and praiſe, obedience and gratitude, confidence and truſt. When this affection is in proper exerciſe, and the divine character is rightly apprehended, it becomes complacency,

* Matth. v. 17.

cency, and is productive of joy and delight. Love to our neighbour expreſſes itſelf in good will and kindneſs, truth and juſtice, righteouſneſs and charity. And when real amiableneſs of character is perceived, love ſurpaſſes the ordinary bounds of benevolence, and is refined into complacency, the reſult of which is harmony and happineſs.

Let us now attend particularly to the *ſecond* table of the law, love to our neighbour, which enjoins all relative and ſocial duties, and prohibits all the contrary vices. Theſe precepts, which are ſix in number, and begin with the fifth in the decalogue, have reſpect to all ſtations and relations in life, and extend as well to the deſires of the heart, as to the outward actions. The *firſt* enjoins on children all due honour and obedience towards their parents; and with equal reaſon, on parents, all proper affection and care towards children. It requires all ſuitable reſpect to ſuperiors, kindneſs to equals, and condeſcenſion to inferiors, and prohibits every ſentiment and action inconſiſtent with theſe virtues. The *ſecond* is, Thou ſhalt not kill; and forbids every diſpoſition and action, which tends to injure the life and health of our neighbour, with all hatred, malice, and revenge; and requires a ſincere deſire and endeavour to preſerve his life and health, and to promote his happineſs. The *third* prohibits the violation of the marriage covenant and every kind and degree of lewdneſs, and requires chaſtity in heart, ſpeech, and behaviour. The *fourth* is, Thou ſhalt not ſteal. By this command, all theft, burglary, robbery, fraud, counterfeiting the currency and legal writings, and whatever tends unjuſtly to deprive our neighbour of his property, is abſolutely prohibited; and the oppoſite virtues, by parity of reaſon and full implication,

are

are ſtrictly commanded. The *fifth* utterly forbids all perjury, lying, falſehood, and prevarication ; and implicitly enjoins on every man, to ſpeak the truth to his neighbour in converſation and in witneſs bearing, whether he ſpeak without or under the obligation of an oath. The *ſixth* aims directly at the heart. It forbids coveting the property and enjoyments of our neighbour ; and implies that we be contented with ſuch things as we have by the allotments of Providence, and can procure by honeſt induſtry. The coveting, which is a violation of the divine law of love to our neighbour, is an earneſt deſire to poſſeſs and enjoy the poſſeſſions and comforts of other people, without regard to equity and juſtice. To covet in this ſenſe is ſinful ; and it prompts to unrighteous meaſures to obtain the things coveted. It induces deception, fraud, ſtealing, and the moſt atrocious crimes. Thus, to covet is the corrupt fountain whence flow thoſe injurious vices, which frequently ſcourge individuals and ſociety. This is the bitter root from which ſpring up fraud, injuſtice, ſtealing, robbery, and, ſometimes, murder. According to the confeſſion of the unhappy convict before us, all his crimes, which have more directly procured proſecutions, priſons, puniſhments (and I may add, the gallows) may be traced to this ſecret, fruitful, and corrupt ſource. There is a ſenſe in which it is virtuous to covet, viz. to " covet earneſtly the beſt gifts." We may ardently deſire to excel in goodneſs and uſefulneſs, and for this purpoſe, to be diſtinguiſhed by endowments. But this deſire having for its objects ſpiritual things and the benefit of men, is the very oppoſite in its nature and effects to that ſinful luſting, or coveting, after evil things, and things to which we have no juſt right.

That

That ſuch, as above ſtated, is the true meaning of love to our neighbour, is evident from a great number of paſſages in the ſacred ſcriptures. To cite one only may be ſufficient to our preſent purpoſe.— "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment (that is, enjoining relative duties) it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, viz. Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf."*

The ſenſe of the text will be more perſpicuous, whilſt we attend to the *nature* of love. It is a true character given in ſcripture of the Deity, that he "is a God of peace, and not of confuſion:" and a more perfect one, when it is ſaid, "God is love." Hence all moral duty, all religion, which is deſigned to make men good, holy, and happy like God, is ſummed up in love. The moral law is a tranſcript of the divine mind, and conſiſts ſummarily in love to God and love to men. According to this ſtatement, it is evident that love to our neighbour is of the ſame nature and kind, as the love of God to men. He hath for men a love of benevolence and a love of complacency, which he expreſſes, as they are by moral character qualified to receive.

I will now diſtinctly conſider love to our neighbour in both theſe operations.

The love of benevolence intends a diſpoſition to do good to our neighbour, and an actual exhibition of the inward purpoſe. There muſt be both the willing

* Rom. xiii. 7, 8, 9.

mind

mind and the actual performance of good deeds. True benevolence is therefore totally oppoſed to all hatred, violence, injuſtice, and unkindneſs in diſpoſition and behaviour. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour."* Nor muſt this exerciſe of benevolence be the reſult merely of a caſually unruffled ſtate of the paſſions, nor be limited by particular occaſions and circumſtances; but it muſt be the prevailing bias and the habitual frame of the mind and heart. Neither is it dependent on the temper and treatment of others; but it is the moſt prominent and permanent feature of the ſoul towards our neighbour, which both really and apparently includes and gives complexion and life to all the other features. A perſon truly benevolent would feel a diſpoſition to do good and to make his fellow creatures happy, though not one of them were diſpoſed to receive his kindneſs, or to be grateful for his favours. In this, as he ought, he reſembles God, who cauſeth his ſun to riſe and his rain to fall, as well on the evil, as on the good, as well on the ungrateful, as on the thankful. Otherwiſe, the benevolence of a perſon would be meaſured by the worthineſs or unworthineſs of the objects. In this caſe, multitudes would not have the leaſt benevolence ſhown them, for they are wholly unworthy.

But as one perfection of God cannot be in ſuch a ſenſe infinite, as to infringe on any one other perfection, ſo neither does chriſtian benevolence interfere with the proper exerciſe of juſtice, even when it inflicts pain and puniſhment. Love to others, to ſociety, to ourſelves, may require us, in a due courſe of law, to abridge the natural and civil liberty of individuals, to inflict puniſhment on offenders, and even to take away the life of malefactors, whoſe abuſe of liberty, vicious conduct, and continuance in life are

* Rom. xiii. 10.

dangerous

dangerous to the peace and happineſs of individuals and the community. The law of love commands, and government is obliged, as far as poſſible, to preſerve the peace and order of ſociety, and the quiet poſſeſſion of life, liberty, and property to individuals. Perſons the moſt humane and benevolent, are, ſometimes, conſtrained by the law, by a ſenſe of duty, of juſtice, and benevolence to puniſh offenders, for whom they have pity and compaſſion, and whom they would joyfully relieve, could they do it in conſiſtence with equity and fidelity. Love to ſociety, to the great body of the people, frequently requires the execution of juſtice on individuals in pains and penalties. From this view it is evident that the love of benevolence due to our neighbour, is of the ſame nature with the diſpoſition and moral character of God, who is infinite in benevolence.

The love we owe to our fellow-men reſembles that of Deity in another reſpect, viz. in diſtinguiſhing between the objects of kindneſs and the objects of complacency. And it is only when love is conſidered, as complacency, that it is limited by the character of the perſons loved. To this operation of love I will briefly ſpeak.

Love becomes complacency only when the object is poſſeſſed of good and amiable moral qualities. As God, who ſcatters bleſſings on the evil and the good, hath complacency only in the good ; ſo chriſtians, however affectionate and charitable they may be, can have complacency only in the virtuous and good, who are poſſeſſed of ſuch amiable qualities, as anſwer to their ideas of moral beauty. There is no religious harmony between the virtuous and vicious, though the latter as well as the former may poſſeſs many agreeable qualifications. Natural and acquired

accompliſhments

accompliſhments may engage our natural affections and give us real ſatisfaction, as ſocial beings: but without moral goodneſs there can be no religious complacency and mutual delight. "For what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? and what communion hath light with darkneſs? and what concord hath Chriſt with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" We are liable, however, through ignorance and error in judgment, to withold our complacency from ſome to whom it is due, and to beſtow it on others really unworthy.

The qualifying words in our text, *as thyſelf*, are deſigned to expreſs the quality, rather than the degree of love. To love our neighbour as ourſelves, is, to exerciſe towards him the ſame kind of tender affection, benevolent diſpoſition, and friendly care, which we do for ourſelves. This conſtruction anſwers all the purpoſes, and preſerves the force and perfection, of the precept, without involving any abſurdity, or diſcouraging human exertions. Some perſons, perhaps, may love ſome other, as much, as they do themſelves, in ſome reſpects at leaſt: but this ſenſe is not enjoined, I conceive, as the rule and meaſure for all men. The ſame kind of attention, care, and endeavour, which we generally have for our own perſon, character, intereſt, and happineſs being exerciſed towards our neighbour, is to love him as ourſelves. In this light I underſtand the precept.

The *extent* of this law under conſideration next demands attention.

Our bleſſed Saviour hath taught us by the ſtory of the man, who fell among thieves, that we are to look upon all men as our neighbours, and eſpecially,

when

when we have any concerns with them, and opportunity to ſhow them kindneſs. Our Lord, on having this queſtion put to him, "Who is my neighbour?" anſwered, "A certain man went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which ſtripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance, there came down a certain prieſt that way; and when he ſaw him, he paſſed by on the other ſide. And likewiſe a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and paſſed by on the other ſide. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he ſaw him, he had compaſſion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and ſet him on his own beaſt, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the hoſt, and ſaid unto him, Take care of him, and whatſoever thou ſpendeſt more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of theſe three, thinkeſt thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he ſaid, he that ſhewed mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, go, and do thou likewiſe."* It is worthy notice, that the unfortunate man was a Jew; the prieſt and Levite, who neglected him, were of the ſame nation; but the real neighbour was a Samaritan; and ſuch alienation and enmity ſubſiſted between the Jews and Samaritans, that the former had no dealings with the latter. It is here clearly ſet forth, that we are to conſider all men as our neighbours, and that we are bound by the law of love, to aid and relieve the neceſſitous, whenever we have opportunity and ability.

All this is perfectly conſiſtent with ſelf-defence,

* Luke x. 30, &c.

and

and even taking the life of an enemy, when he will not ceaſe to behave inimically on eaſier terms. I ſpeak here only of public enemies and private aſſaſſins and robbers, who threaten, or endeavour, to deſtroy life. Ordinary perſonal enemies ſhould be the objects of our love of benevolence. Our Lord commands, "Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you." If we love our friends only, what reward have we? Do not even publicans and ſinners the ſame?

Our affection may be proportioned to the nearneſs and dearneſs of relations. But I will not enlarge on this idea. One obſervation farther ought not to be omitted. It is the command of Chriſt, "Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye the ſame unto them." In this precept, there is no exception of perſons or characters. Whatſoever ye would, or could, in reaſon and propriety, deſire men to do unto you, in preſent, or change of, circumſtances, that do ye unto them; that is the rule of your duty, the meaſure of your conduct towards them.

Should a tranſgreſſor of the uſeful and neceſſary laws of ſociety, ſuffering puniſhment for evil doing, ſay, I would that men take no cognizance of my crimes, or that they releaſe me from priſon, and excuſe me from puniſhment, it would be altogether unreaſonable. The offender ought to query thus, Would I, that men ſhould do unto me and mine, as I have done unto them and theirs? Would I, that they ſhould follow ſuch pernicious practices to my detriment, as I have followed to their injury? And were I in their place and they in mine, would I, or could I, in reaſon and juſtice, releaſe them from priſon and puniſhment, and ſuffer them to purſue their vile and miſchievous

miſchievous career without interruption? Such queries properly made and anſwered, are ſufficient to ſilence the complaint of oppreſſion to ſufferers for evil doing, and to ſuppreſs, in criminals under puniſhment, that ſpirit of hatred and revenge againſt government and people, which they too frequently indulge and exhibit. Their revenge ſhould turn upon themſelves and their own evil practices, and not on ſociety, which is obliged in ſelf-defence, and in love to others, to diſcipline them by the civil law, "which is made, not for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient."*

There are two eſſential properties of love, viz. ſincerity and impartiality, which merit ſome attention in this place. But they are ſo far obviouſly implied in the preceding, and I have already been lengthy in explanation, that barely to mention them muſt ſuffice. I proceed

Secondly, To ſhow the reaſonableneſs and obligation of the law of love to our neighbour.

The *reaſonableneſs* of this law appears in its adaptation to the nature, powers, condition, and exigencies of man. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth;" and hath given to all the ſame general nature and deſtination, the ſame wants and obligations. We are all members of the ſame great family, and are neceſſarily connected by mutual deſires, attachments, and wants. Our intellectual powers, ſocial faculties, and animal propenſities, our condition in the world, our dependence on each other, and our exigencies, being in general the ſame, it is moſt fit and reaſonable that we be under the obligation of the law of good-will and kindneſs, of reciprocal affection and aid; and this law is properly expreſſed by the words, benevo-

* 1 Tim. i. 9.

lence,

lence, love, charity. Our nature and condition in this life demand, and our rational and ſocial faculties dictate, mutual expreſſions of love and kindneſs. All the underſtanding of man, and all the reaſon and fitneſs of things, require, approve, and urge this divine law of love to our neighbour.

The vaſt benefit, which reſults from the exerciſe of love, and the deſtructive evils, which follow the oppoſite, farther prove the reaſonableneſs of this law. The happineſs to individuals, to families, and to all ſocieties, which is the genuine fruit of love, is beyond all calculation and deſcription. The full exerciſe of love towards all our relations, ſociety, and the whole family of man, is itſelf a ſtate of happineſs, eſpecially if it be accompanied by love to God. And when love is the principle, the ſpring, the rule of action in all the members of a family, ſociety, or world, the whole muſt be moſt pleaſed and bleſt. There would be no diſcord, jealouſies, nor fears; no hatred, malice, nor revenge; no injuſtice, fraud, nor pilfering; no violence, oppreſſion, nor falſehood; no coveting, diſcontent, nor repining; no intemperance, lewdneſs, nor idleneſs; no diſobedience to parents, neglect of children, nor diſreſpect to conſtituted authorities. There would be no need of penal laws, priſons, and corporal puniſhments. Every family, ſociety, and the world, would be a heaven in kind.

But on the other hand, what countleſs evils, what ſin and miſery naturally and neceſſarily flow from the oppoſite principles and practices, to individuals, to families, and to ſociety! Let us ſuppoſe, for a moment, the entire ceſſation of love, and the full operation of hatred one to another, and of all thoſe corrupt luſts and paſſions, which ſpring up in the human heart. Every man would covet, and then ſteal,

or

or violently ſeize the things of his neighbour. The more artful and mighty would prey upon the more weak and defenceleſs. Injuſtice and rapine would be the order of every day; and mutual fears, plots, contentions, violence, and murder, would be only the more conſpicuous lines in the horrible portrait. Parents would be againſt children, and children againſt parents; huſbands and wives would be plagues to each other, and brothers, ſiſters, connexions, and neighbours, would be mutual tormentors. Even natural affection would ceaſe to operate under the reign of hatred; friendſhip would be unknown; and people would often become murderers of fathers, of mothers, of children, and deadly enemies to all about them on every trivial occaſion. The general conſent and practice would be, to bite and devour one another, and the unavoidable conſequence would be complicated wretchedneſs and deſtruction. Every family, every ſociety, if ſocieties properly ſpeaking could ſubſiſt, and the world itſelf would be a hell in ſort, and a lively picture of the infernal regions. Who doth not ſee the boundleſs reaſon of love to our neighbour, and the neceſſity of it to human happineſs and moral excellence!

To what has been ſaid very little need be added, to ſhow the *obligation* of this law on every one of the human race. Its obligation reſults from its reaſonableneſs, its utility, the neceſſity of it to the happineſs of men, and to the very exiſtence of ſocial order and civil ſociety, and from the authority of God in the command. We have ſhown the reaſonableneſs, the utility, and the neceſſity of ſuch a law; its obligation on us, therefore, is manifeſt and undeniable. While the nature and condition of man ſhall be, as they now are, ſo long we ſhall be indiſſolubly bound by

the law of love. In its very nature it is unalterable and perpetual; for the duties required originate in the eternal reaſon and fitneſs of things, and in the moral nature, relations, and condition of man. "Till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled."* We muſt, therefore, obey this law of love in the ſincerity of our hearts, and look by faith to Jeſus Chriſt, as the end of the law for righteouſneſs, or ſuffer forever the penalty, the juſt puniſhment of our tranſgreſſions.

The obligation of this law appears farther, as it is enjoined by the authority of the eternal God. It is true, he gave the commands becauſe they were, and are, replete with reaſon and goodneſs, moſt ſuitable and needful. But whatever God commands, whether it be a moral or poſitive law, is obligatory on us, and the more ſo, if poſſible, in proportion to the manifeſt reaſon and fitneſs of the law. I will only add, on this article, they who preſume to contemn this authority and diſobey this law, muſt, one day, experience, unleſs they repent of ſin and believe in Chriſt, what it is to fall under the wrath of God and the curſe of this law without remedy or hope.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. The allowed tranſgreſſors of the law of love to their neighbour, have not the love of God in them, nor his love of complacency towards them: but they are enemies to him by a ſinful diſpoſition and by wicked works. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."† "And if a man ſay, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?

* Matt. v. 18. Luke xvi. 17. † 1 John, v. 3.

ſeen?" † There is an inſeparable connexion between the two great commandments of the law. Unfeigned obedience to both, according to the goſpel, is neceſſary to prove the renovation of our minds, the goodneſs of our hearts, and qualification for the bliſsful preſence of God.

2. The tranſgreſſion of this law renders neceſſary dreary priſons, pecuniary and corporal puniſhments in a courſe of civil law, and occaſions vaſt infelicity and expenſe to the peaceable and virtuous members of ſociety. Were it not for ſins againſt our neighbour, yon diſmal jail would be unneceſſary. Thoſe iron doors and bolts might be converted into inſtruments of agriculture. Idleneſs and vice, complaints and groans, oaths and imprecations, miſery and wretchedneſs, would there no longer wound our ſenſibility and pain our hearts. No more would wretched criminals be doomed to ſmart beneath the painful ſcourge, nor mount the ſhameful pillory to bear the public ſcorn, and in their fleſh receive the indelible marks of infamy and vice. The now intended uſe of yonder fatal gallows might be changed. Inſtead of a machine to take the precious life, and ſend a fellow-mortal to the world of ſpirits, it might be uſed to ſhelter, or to warm, the ſhivering limbs of poor and virtuous families. Inſtead of all this ſolemn pomp, this awful ſcene, this terrible parade of execution, at the ſight of which compaſſion mourns, and pity weeps, each countenance beſpeaks deep felt concern, and every nerve perceives unuſual tremor; inſtead, I ſay, of this new trial of humanity to moſt of us, we might be quietly in ſearch of ſacred truth, or with united hearts and voice, proclaiming praiſe to God for bleſſings ſocial, civil, and religious, or, in the private walks of life, engaged in pleaſing offices

† 1 John iv. 20.

of

of love. O, the happineſs of this reverſe! And O, how much to be lamented is the want of univerſal love to neighbours!

3. Love to ſociety joins with ſelf love in puniſhing the tranſgreſſors of this law. We form the ſocial compact, inſtitute civil government, enact laws, authoriſe judiciary courts, for the great purpoſe of preſerving, in peace and ſafety, our property, our life, our civil and ſacred rights and privileges. By thus entering into the obligations of civil ſociety, we agree moſt ſolemnly, to aid and defend each other and the whole body againſt every one, who ſhall treſpaſs on ſociety or an individual. We ſhould at once violate all our ſocial and civil obligations, and expoſe ourſelves to rapine and ruin, were we not to riſe againſt the criminal invaders of private and public rights and property. We are bound by love and duty to each individual and the whole community, to ſupport the order of ſociety, and to aid the execution of the laws againſt the wicked diſturbers of private perſons and ſociety. In the painful taſk of inflicting puniſhment on offenders, we are actuated by love, duty, conſcience, and faithfulneſs; and ill-will, hatred, and revenge, have no part in this buſineſs. The ſame principles, doubtleſs, actuate government, which is the people by civil conſtitution. This conſideration ſhould prevent the indulgence and even the riſing of enmity in the breaſts of criminals againſt the government, the legiſlature, judicial courts, jurors, and executive officers. The motives, which prompt to puniſh, are the very oppoſite to thoſe, which incited to acts of wickedneſs.

4. They who ſteal, break up and plunder houſes and ſtores, ſet fire to buildings, rob travellers, ſecretly take or deſtroy the property of others by art or violence,

violence, commit murder, or otherwiſe wilfully endanger the life of another, are in a ſtate of real hoſtility againſt ſociety and the individual members of it. They are governed by hatred to their neighbour, and by thoſe baſe paſſions, which follow in her train. In the perpetration of the leſs atrocious of thoſe crimes, their hatred may ſeem to them, to wear only the appearance of coveting, diſhoneſty, and injuſtice; to indulge which they feel ſtrongly inclined. They may even imagine that they harbour no ill-will towards any perſon, and may in reality be kind to ſome neighbours,* who are ſituated near to them, and whoſe friendſhip and aid they frequently need. But they know not their own ſelves. They are deceived by a falſe colouring. The truth is, they are in heart and life the allowed enemies of ſociety; and a change of local neighbours and circumſtances would prove them ſuch in every direction. Not love and goodneſs, but hatred and injuſtice reign in them, and have dominion over them. Cupidity, avarice, revenge, or ſome peculiar circumſtances, may be the immediate ſpur, but the principle is hatred, or, to ſay the leaſt, the abſence of love gives an opening for the operation of the vile and malignant paſſions.

5. To exerciſe and cultivate love to our neighbour is of the higheſt importance. Thus doing, we may be harmonious and happy in all the various ſtages and circumſtances of ordinary life. But in the contrary, we muſt be miſerable in this world and in that which is to come. Without love to our neighbour, we are peſts in ſociety, and are prepared for

* Smith repeatedly ſpake to me of his neighbourly diſpoſition and actions, and ſaid, it was a comfort to him, to reflect that he had been a *kind neighbour*.

for the company of demons in the regions of diſcord, hatred, and miſery. A thorough change only can qualify us for a world of love and happineſs.

6. It is vaſtly important that the ſocial duties of love be impreſſed on the minds of children and youth. Great care ſhould be taken by parents and inſtructors, to implant the principles of virtue and piety, and to form the diſpoſitions and habits in early life. Thus educated, there is good ground for hope, that they will reſiſt the force of oppoſite principles and temptations in riper years. Children ſhould be encouraged in every virtuous ſentiment and practice. They ſhould be inceſſantly taught to revere the rights of others, and to realize the obligation of love and goodneſs.

7. The wilful tranſgreſſors of this command to love our neighbour, are, in that character, totally diſqualified for heaven and happineſs. Their diſpoſitions and habits are oppoſed to love and holineſs.—They have no moral taſte for intellectual and religious exerciſes and enjoyments. It is true, they may deſire happineſs and dread miſery. This is natural. But the bias of the mind, and the prevailing tendency of the ſoul, are inconſiſtent with the pure joys and holy employments of heaven. Being under the influence of vicious paſſions and habits, they muſt of neceſſity be miſerable. And were they to be introduced to the immediate preſence of God, and the company of ſaints and angels, they would feel the horrors and pains of hell: for heaven and hell conſiſt principally in character and condition, and in the enjoyments and torments thence naturally reſulting. A wicked mind, having all the paſſions and propenſities raging, but without deſired gratification, muſt neceſſarily be in miſery. But on the other hand,

perſons

perſons in the full exerciſe of love and goodneſs muſt infallibly be pleaſed and happy. How, then, can the wicked and unholy, who love not their Maker and fellow men, eſcape the wrath to come? There is one only method, viz. *repentance* towards God and *faith* in Jeſus Chriſt. They muſt ſo repent of all ſin, as to forſake and hate moral evil, and thoroughly reform; and they muſt ſo believe in Jeſus Chriſt, as the Son of God and only Saviour, as cordially to accept what he hath done for ſinners, and ſincerely conform to his goſpel. Chriſt is the only way of ſalvation, the only name given under heaven whereby we muſt be ſaved.§ God is ready to ſhow mercy, to grant pardon, and to give eternal life to thoſe, who ſincerely repent of their ſins, truſt in Chriſt, and look for ſalvation through him. Such repentance and faith include a change of heart, a renovation of the whole man, and the reſtoration of that moral image of God, which was loſt by ſin. Thus they are qualified to enjoy heaven, while they are pardoned and juſtified for the ſake of the complete atonement and perfect righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. In this way, all people, who hear the ſound of the goſpel, who read the Bible, have the offer of ſalvation from ſin and wrath to come. "If any man thirſt, let him come;* and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely.† Jeſus Chriſt is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him.‡ He is exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveneſs of ſins."‖ The chief of ſinners, and at the laſt hour of life, if they ſincerely repent, and believe in Chriſt, ſhall be accepted of God, and ſaved in the great day of the Lord.

It

§ Acts iv. 12. * John vii. 37. † Rev. xxii. 17.
‡ Heb. vii. 25. ‖ Acts v. 31.

It is now proper to make application and addreſſes. And

1. To you, Samuel Smith, who are this day to ſuffer the pains of ignominious death, by the hand of civil juſtice, for aggravated violations of the law of love to your neighbour. Unhappy man! we feel for you the bowels of compaſſion, and ardent deſires for your future ſalvation. We have aimed to inſtruct and benefit you, and not to increaſe your diſgrace and wretchedneſs. We pretend not that your ſins are more heinous in the ſight of God, than the ſins of many others thieves, who have not been convicted of capital offences. And it has been a ſatisfaction to me and others, to hear you declare with ſo much evidence of ſincerity, that you have never had an intention to take the life of a fellow mortal. But the law, that puniſhes burglary with death, proceeds on the ſuppoſition, that houſe-breakers for the purpoſe of ſtealing, intend to commit murder, if it be found neceſſary to prevent detection. It may, however, have been more owing to the reſtraining grace of God and to circumſtances, that you have not ſhed innocent blood, than to your own principles and reſolutions.

The diſappointments and troubles, which you met with, when young,* and the conſequent derangement of your mind and worldly affairs, if your late declarations be true, were powerful temptations, in a mind deſtitute of religion, to the practice of injuſtice and ſtealing: and your ſufferings deſerved commiſeration. But inſtead of turning to God and ſubmitting to him in the day of adverſity, you choſe the way of wickedneſs. And after all that can be ſaid in

* It is thought not expedient to mention particularly the cauſes of thoſe troubles above ſuggeſted.

in your favour, it is evident that you have been a heinous ſinner, during many years. This you have readily acknowledged, as alſo the juſtice of God in bringing you to legal conviction and puniſhment. Although, as you ſay, you have been kind in many inſtances to ſome people in your particular neighbourhood, and to your children, as a fond parent, yet your life, for thirty years paſt, has been a predatory warfare againſt ſociety and individual families and perſons. The law of God condemns you, as a tranſgreſſor. But had you lived without any open and groſs acts of wickedneſs forbidden by the moral law, and yet in the neglect of Chriſt and his goſpel, you muſt be under the ſentence of the divine law. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* To be condemned by the law of God, as a tranſgreſſor, and for rejecting Jeſus Chriſt, and to have that ſentence executed at the final judgment, muſt be infinitely more dreadful, than to be condemned and executed by the laws of ſociety.—Man hath power only to kill the body; but God is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell. †

Miniſters and other people have affectionately endeavoured to aſſiſt you in preparation for another world. With what ſucceſs, I am not able to ſay.—The preſent is the laſt opportunity you will have for inſtruction, for repentance, and for reconciliation with God. You are now once more exhorted to repent of all your ſins, and urged to fly for refuge to Chriſt the Saviour. Look on him, whom your ſins have pierced, and mourn. Now is the day of ſalvation, and, I believe, literally the laſt day of grace and

* John iii. 18. † Matt. x. 28. mercy

mercy to you. Now, then, after ſo long a time, harden not your heart. ‡

In the moſt full and unfeigned manner, confeſs and forſake your ſins, and then you may hope for mercy. "Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins ſhall have mercy." Humbly rely on Chriſt alone for ſalvation, and, then, though your ſins are of a ſcarlet colour and a crimſom dye, they ſhall be white as ſnow and wool. ‖ "He that believeth ſhall be ſaved."

Endeavour to pray to God in the name of Chriſt, if peradventure the thoughts of thine heart and the ſins of thy life may be forgiven. Pray that God would create in you a clean heart, and give you a right frame of ſpirit; and continue to ſeek him to the laſt moment of your life, with this reſolution, if you periſh, it ſhall be pleading for mercy through the glorious Redeemer.

While you have a heart to pray, to be ſorry for ſin, to love your neighbour, and look to Chriſt, you need not deſpair of ſalvation. God hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that he repent, and turn, and live. § But to evidence true peace with God, you much be at peace with men. You muſt forgive to every one, both real and ſuppoſed injuries. You have ſaid, people have falſely accuſed you, and thereby brought on you vexation and expenſe: but in this caſe, you muſt freely forgive them, as you hope for pardon from God. Our Saviour hath declared, "If ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes." * Indulge no hard thoughts towards any perſons. O forgive your fellow-men, while you pray God to be merciful unto you a ſinner. And now we commit and commend you to God and to the word and power

‡ Heb. iv. 7. ‖ Iſa. i. 18. § Ezek. xviii. 23, 32. * Matt. vi. 15.

power of his grace and mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, praying that you may be eternally a monument of mercy and an heir of glory.

2. Our text furniſhes an intereſting portion for criminals in general.† Conſider, ye tranſgreſſors of the law of love to your neighbour, your late wretched companion in wickedneſs, who has ſuffered death for his crimes; and be warned by his awful doom to fly from the wrath to come, and to forſake thoſe paths of vice, which lead to a ſimilar end. Your ſituation is extremely dangerous and awful. You have hitherto eſcaped the tremendous ſcene and pains of execution; and moſt of you, perhaps, have not committed thoſe crimes, which are made capital by the law. And as you have not had your fears alarmed by the immediate proſpect of death and judgment, I have reaſon to believe that you are careleſs about your ſouls and another world. Do you not ſtill put far away the evil day, and neglect to conſider your ways? As you have choſen the way of tranſgreſſors, and ſome of you have continued long in oppoſition to God and men, you are in imminent danger of being forſaken of God, of being hardened in ſin, ſo as to commit more and greater wickedneſs, and be brought to the gallows. You ſtand on ſlippery places, and your feet will ſlide in due time.‡ You have been often reproved in various ways, and by many perſons. Your impriſonment and corporal puniſhments are conſtant and ſenſible admonitions to you, and fully demonſtrate to you that, "the way of tranſgreſſors is hard." You are now, by this diſcourſe, warned and exhorted to repent, and turn from your evil ways, that iniquity be not your ruin.

Conſider,

† This addreſs has been added ſince the diſcourſe was delivered.

‡ Pſal. lxxiii. 18. Deut. xxxii. 35.

Conſider, I beſeech you, the ſolemn words of inſpiration, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy." ‖ O, tremble for yourſelves, leſt God ſhould verify to you this awful threatening, and ſuddenly cut you off from the light of life and the hope of heaven!

Were you to love your neighbour as yourſelves, you would never invade, nor ſteal, nor deſtroy his property. You would no ſooner unjuſtly deprive him of his poſſeſſions, than you would utterly deſtroy your own; nor ſooner endanger his health, or happineſs, or life, than your own. You are bound to do unto others, whatſoever ye would that they ſhould do unto you. Then, "let him that ſtole, ſteal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." §

Take heed that you do not increaſe your ſins and treaſure up wrath by indulging hatred and revenge againſt ſociety and particular perſons. What can they do to preſerve their peace and property better, than to confine and puniſh you? Do you think, government wiſhes to create unneceſſary expenſe and trouble? or that it delights in your confinement and diſgrace? no; as it did nothing to provoke your firſt offence, ſo you are diſciplined by the law, only to prevent you and others from farther crimes, and to defend the innocent in the quiet enjoyment of life, liberty, and property.

Beware of coveting the things, which belong to other people. "Thou ſhalt not covet." Suffer me now, once more, to warn and beſeech you, to reſolve in the preſence of God, and with prayers for his aiding grace, that henceforth you will induſtriouſly fol-

‖ Prov. xxix. 1. § Eph. iv. 28.

low

low ſome honeſt calling, and "be content with ſuch things as you have;" that you will "be diligent in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord."

3. Parents and heads of families ſhould be religiouſly attentive to prepare the riſing generation for ſocial and civil life. Let it be your conſtant care, to train them up in the way they ſhould go, and then you may confidently hope, they will not depart from it in riper years. Some parents, like pious, but faulty Eli, are too indulgent to their children, and do not ſeaſonably and reſolutely reſtrain them from vicious practices: and many like him alſo, when it is too late, mourn their folly. Some parents err on the other hand, eſpecially in reſpect to worldly affairs. You ſhould be kind and juſt to your children, and to young people under your care, as well as ſtrict and vigilant over them. You ſhould "not be bitter againſt them," nor refuſe to give, or pay them, in proper time, what is reaſonable and juſt, "leſt they be diſcouraged," their innocent emulation be cramped, their affections be alienated, and their minds indiſpoſed to the ſteady purſuit of profitable buſineſs. The unhappy criminal before us, has declared to me, in a feeling manner, and with a requeſt, that I would warn parents againſt injuſtice to their children, that the hard treatment of his father,* when he wiſhed to ſettle in a family ſtate, was one great ſource of his early trouble, and the principal cauſe of his beginning to ſteal. Whether we give full credit to this ſtory, or not, it is an undoubted truth, that the hardneſs and injuſtice of parents and maſters towards children and ſervants, have very pernicious effects on their minds. Such treatment tends directly

* Smith often ſpake of his mother, and always with affection and reſpect. He eſteemed her as a kind parent and excellent chriſtian.

ly to counteract a ſenſe of equity, goodneſs, and love, and to quench every ſpark of laudable ambition. If you would have thoſe under your care grow up and perſevere in the exerciſe of love to their neighbour, in the full extent of the law of love, you muſt not only teach them their duty by precepts, but you muſt ſet before them a living example. Then ſhall your hearts be made glad by the wiſdom and virtue of your children and charge.

4. Young people are inſtructed by our diſcourſe. My young friends, you ſee the ſhame and wretchedneſs, which attend on vice, and that "ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death." Be ſolicitous to ſhun the paths of ſin, for they lead to deſtruction. Cultivate a lively ſenſe of love to mankind, and ever act on the ſtricteſt principles of benevolence, truth, and righteouſneſs to all people. Dread the firſt ſtep to any ſcandalous vice, and "abſtain from all appearance of evil." Fear God, and keep his commandments, through Jeſus Chriſt, as the only ſure and peaceful way to honour, glory, and eternal happineſs.

5. Let this numerous aſſembly make application. Every perſon is under the obligation of the law of love to God and our neighbour. How have we obeyed this law? Have we loved our neighbour as ourſelves? Are not many of us guilty concerning our brother? Let us ſearch and prove our own ways, and reſolutely reform whatever we find to be inconſiſtent with love. Let every one ſet his face, as a flint, againſt prevailing vices. Accept the admonition, which this dying criminal hath deſired might be given, not to neglect public worſhip, and the religious obſervation of the Sabbath.* Such neglect keeps

* Smith had been very faulty in reſpect to public worſhip and the Sabbath, which he lamented. He ſaw that it kept him ignorant and hardened, and gave him opportunity to contrive and perpetrate wickedneſs.

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keeps people out of the way of hearing the word of God explained, and of having their duty inculcated upon them. When people forſake the houſe, profane the day, and neglect the word of God, let them expect that their temptations and their ſins will be multiplied, and that God will caſt them off forever.

This day, my hearers, for the firſt time in this town, we ſee, as to this world, the cloſing ſcene of coveting and ſtealing. God grant there may be none occaſion for another of this kind. But if any preſent ſhould ever meditate the crime of theft with approbation, let him alſo think of the gallows. The connexion between the crime and the gibbet, is much nearer and more natural, than many ſuppoſe. Behold this thief, and tremble at the thought of ſtealing, which naturally leads on to burglary, robbery, murder, and the gallows. Let ſinners ſee and fear. Let them ſuppreſs every injurious paſſion, and covetous deſire, leſt they be imperceptibly hurried on to the commiſſion of one crime after another, until ſwift deſtruction come upon them. Let us all reſolve to embrace, by divine aid, with all our heart, the perfect law of love to God and man.

" Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to preſent us faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy, be praiſe and honour forever."

AMEN.